

whether they live in Washington, Geneva, Beijing, or Taipei. In 1998, Taiwan suffered an outbreak of enterovirus 71, a potentially fatal disease that causes severe inflammation of muscle surrounding the brain, spinal cord, and heart. Infants and children are particularly vulnerable to this highly contagious virus. Unfortunately, the Taiwanese doctors treating enterovirus 71 did not have access to the medical resources of the WHO. By the time the outbreak was under control, 70 Taiwanese children had died. Had Taiwan been permitted to draw on WHO expertise, these children could very well still be alive.

But as Taiwan benefits from participation in the WHO, so does the rest of the world. Taiwan, with a highly developed health care system, has made great advances in science and technology. Inclusion in WHO would allow American health officials better access to Taiwanese information, as much as the other way around.

Mr. Speaker, our government's tacit support for the status quo, our unwillingness to fight for Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization, is not only short-sighted, it is unjustifiable. Infectious diseases do not respect politically driven distinctions or national borders. Infectious diseases travel. If there is TB in Taiwan, there will inevitably be TB in the U.S. If there is HIV/AIDS in South Africa, there will inevitably be HIV/AIDS in Brazil.

Mr. Speaker, global illnesses are just that, global. No country is immune when one country faces a public health crisis. Recently, the administration decided to sell four Kidd-class destroyers to Taiwan, despite threats from the People's Republic of China. If our commitment as a Nation is strong enough to justify supporting Taiwan's military defense with arms sales, it certainly is strong enough to justify supporting access to global health resources for Taiwan's 23.5 million people.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the strong support H.R. 428 has received from Members on both sides of the aisle, and look forward to the bill's passage today. I call on President Bush to do the right thing, to go to Geneva and fight for observer status for Taiwan at the World Health Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE).

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 428. I thank the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) for their excellent work on this measure.

Mr. Speaker, the passage of this measure before the House will mark yet another triumph for the United States and Taiwan. For too long Taiwan has been denied the benefit of participation in the World Health Organization and a dialogue with its member nations concerning public health policy.

Unfortunately, this absence has prevented the people of Taiwan and the members of the World Health Organization from the experiences of an emerging leader in East Asia. I am pleased that we will correct this oversight today.

Mr. Speaker, we have a moral duty to ensure that our neighbors have access to the same lifesaving information and technology that we enjoy in the United States. As one of the world's most densely populated regions, Taiwan has been successful at controlling infectious diseases and matching the infant mortality rates of developed nations. Yet work remains in areas such as food safety and the control of illegal drugs.

Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organization can help Taiwan in those efforts. I am encouraged by the prospects for all the World Health Organization's members, and I look forward to increased participation by Taiwan in world health events. Ultimately, the real benefit of Taiwan's entry in the WHO will be the children of Taiwan who will have better access to immunizations and preventive care.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in this bipartisan effort in supporting this bill.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, let me stress that arguably the greatest issue in the world today may well be disease control. What the WHO symbolizes is a people-oriented concern for control of disease. Taiwan should not be precluded from expanding its capacity to meet its people's needs, nor precluded from assisting others in less sophisticated health care centers from receiving the support of Taiwanese doctors and health care delivery specialists.

Mr. Speaker, this is a common-sense bill. I urge support of it.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the House Resolution 428 to approve Taiwan participation in the World Health Organization.

Historically the United States and Taiwan have maintained good relationship. Ever since its establishment in 1912 we have had substantive diplomatic and commercial ties. On April 10, 1979, the House of Representatives have enacted Public Law 96-8, known as the Taiwan Relations Act. This Act played a very important role in shaping our policies toward Taiwan. It is considered as a representation of our best ideals to safeguard security and commercial interests in the area.

Taiwan with its population of approximately 20 million has solidly embraced the principles of a democratic society.

Its medical infrastructure is considered to be among the best in the world. According to a recent report, at the end of 1999, there were 152,385 medical personnel in Taiwan. There are currently 11 medical schools, 13 paramedical junior colleges, and 14 paramedical vocational schools.

Virtually all medical specialties known in the Western World are being practiced in Taiwan.

In view of our close diplomatic ties and excellent health care program in Taiwan, I support House Resolution 428 to allow Taiwan to participate in the World Health Organization.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 428 which authorizes the United States Secretary of State to initiate and implement a plan to endorse and obtain observer status for Taiwan at the annual summit of the World Health assembly (of the World Health Organization) this month in Geneva, Switzerland. Taiwan and its 23 million people should have appropriate and meaningful participation in the World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHO Constitution states that the "enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition." Yet today, Taiwan is excluded from participation in the WHO because of political pressure from the People's Republic of China.

This means that the people of Taiwan cannot share in the WHO's vital resources and expertise. Taiwanese physicians and health experts are not allowed to take part in WHO-organized forums and workshops regarding the latest techniques in the diagnosis, monitoring and control of diseases. Taiwanese doctors do not have access to WHO medical protocols and health standards.

This is simply not right. Diseases do not stop at national boundaries, and with today's high frequency of international travel, the possibility of transmitting infectious diseases is greater than ever. Good health is a basic right for every citizen of the world, and Taiwan should be granted membership in the WHO.

Despite its exclusion from the WHO, Taiwan has made some remarkable achievements in the field of health, including one of the highest life expectancy levels in Asia, maternal and infant mortality rates comparable to those of western countries, and the eradication of infectious diseases such as smallpox and the plague. Taiwan is the first Asian nation to be rid of polio and the first country in the world to provide children with free hepatitis B vaccinations.

Prior to 1972 and its loss of membership in the WHO, Taiwan sent specialists to serve on health projects in other members countries, and its experts held key positions in the WHO. In recent years, the Taiwanese government has expressed a willingness to assist financially or technically in WHO-supported international aid and health activities, but it has been unable to render such assistance because it is unable to participate in the international health organization.

Taiwan's population of 23 million people is larger than three-quarters of the member states already in the WHO. Clearly, Taiwan and the world community could benefit by its participation in the WHO. I believe the United States should actively support Taiwan's membership in the World Health Organization.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 428.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the initiative by the gentleman from Ohio, Congressman BROWN, concerning Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization. I commend our committee's distinguished chairman, Mr. HYDE and the ranking minority member, the gentleman from California, Mr. LANTOS and the subcommittee chairmen and ranking minority members of the International Operations and Human Rights